

August 11, 2008

The Honorable Shira A. Scheindlin
United States District Judge
500 Pearl Street, Room 1620
New York, New York 10007

Re: United States v. John Melicharek

Dear Judge Scheindlin,

I write on behalf of my husband Mr. John Melicharek. A person, as a whole, is a result of not just one set of circumstances and choices but of many. I write respectfully with the hope of bringing to light a picture of the man I know John to be.

I would like first to tell you a little bit about myself so that you may know about the source of this opinion. My name is Sandra Melicharek. I am the fifth of six children to immigrant parents. While we lived without a lot of material things, we were well taken care of and received a hard earned catholic school education. A lot of studying and a lot of part-time jobs put a college education within reach for me. I hold a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering, a new Jersey State Teacher's Certificate with Advanced Standing, and a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Special Education. I previously worked for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and currently work for Bergen County Special Services School District. I am an active member of my community and my church. Most importantly, I am the mother of two extraordinary children and a wife to my husband John.

John and I were married at a young age and have been married for 18 years. We each come from loving, hard working families and have strived to continue that tradition. As a husband, John has made many wonderful choices. John has been committed to our marriage through the trials that pull many apart. He supported us, in all senses of the word, when our younger son was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder. He supported me through a career change from engineering, to teaching in order to give back to the community the gifts we had received for our son.

John was there emotionally and physically to help during my father's devastating stroke and eventual death. He took on the role of father and mother during my father's initial nine months in the hospital and then time and time again when he was in and out of the hospital for nine years. John again was a source of strength for me when my elderly uncle in my care became ill, even taking care of my uncle's personal needs on occasion to help him maintain his dignity. The strength of our marriage, even through this current harrowing experience, is a product of the many good choices. That is the man John is, the man I know and love.

John and I have two wonderful boys. John-John, who is 17, has just graduated from high school and plans to attend a two year college for graphic design. He is a talented artist and musician. Paulie, who is 16, will be a senior in high school this coming year and also hopes to go on to college. He is a good student and a star athlete.

As a father, John has made equally wonderful choices. He chose to move from the comfort of the neighborhood he grew up in to give his kids a better environment and a better education. Once in that new neighborhood he became a part of the community helping at sporting events and always having a hand to lend a neighbor in need. John attended family counseling when the boys went through the typical challenges of adolescence, to help them in a way he had not been as a teenager. He chose week after week to attend sporting events for the younger one and week after week to drive the older one to music lessons. Our beautiful, successful children are a product of those choices.

As a son, a sibling, and an in-law, John chooses family first. As a friend and neighbor, he chooses loyalty above all else. As an ironworker, he chooses to work harder than any other. The relationships he has with so many others who have also written to you are a product of those choices.

I mention all these good choices, not because one deserves accolades for doing the right thing, but because I think the sum of these choices demonstrates that these current circumstances are not representative of him as a whole.

Since being released on bail, 8 months ago, John has returned to being a family man. He was sorely missed and the last few months together are a gift we are truly grateful for. John returned to work to help support the household and defray the expense of this situation. Every day he has had off

has been spent with family, expressing his love and his gratitude for their support and building the bonds necessary to carry us through the next few years. John has expressed great remorse to me and the boys for having put us through this ordeal and he is as willing and ready as one can be to pay the consequences for the poor choices that bring him before you.

John's absence, without doubt, will be a great strain on me and my children financially. I have done everything in my power to maintain some type of normalcy for them. However, we have already made many changes in our day to day lives to make ends meet and will most likely have to move from our home that holds ten years of happy memories for us. However, we are hard working and we will find a way to manage. What seems impossible for us to manage is for our family to be broken up by John's absence and not have him as a daily part of our lives.

I truly believe John is capable of and committed to making good choices in his life when he comes home to us. I believe John has many supports that will ensure his successful return to the community: he has and will continue to have the support of a very loving family, he has job to return to with the ironworker's union, and he has proven himself conscientious and compliant while home under the supervision of the Federal Government.

It is my humble request that the court consider sentencing John to as little time as possible. Not only John's future, but the future of my children and my family are at your mercy. I respectfully request the court consider these thoughts when making the decision before you. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra Melicharek". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sandra Melicharek